

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS

Hearing Date: March 11, 2021 8:00 AM

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COMMENTS FOR: HB 478

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Kimberly Young

Election Integrity Project of Nueces County

Corpus Christi, TX

No! This is a bad bill! If this passes, the possibility that a voter could be influenced by an election official's comments would be increased! Whether the comments are intentional or not, the election official should have as little verbal and physical contact with the voter as possible. In Nueces County, every election official that I have come into contact with is abiding by this standard, assuring us a fair right to cast our vote OUR way.

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Karla Bevel

Self-Teacher

Greenville, TX

Everyone deserves accessibility to polling places. Suppression of the right afforded by a democracy to vote is plain and simple, voter suppression. Do the right thing and make it easier for our fellow Texans to vote.

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Corlie Jackson

TXLege, LWV, Texas organizing Project

Galveston, TX

I was a bipartisan poll monitor and/or precinct chair for the last 4 major national elections<2008, 2012, 2016, 2020>. I can personally attest to the problem concerning access/entry into most of the polling places on Galveston and the mainland. There were no visible signs or directions for reaching a poll worker to assist with curbside voting or workers specifically designated to assist the infirmed or COVID cautious voters which resulted in a great deal of time spent outside in the car waiting for assistance. Toward the end people had to bring a 2nd person to assist them get assistance.

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Anthony Padilla

ARA

Buda, TX

As a Senior concerned for making sure we have easy access to voter participation on all voting elections, I am in support of these bills HB 22 and HB 478 as I know that Nearly 3 million voters with disabilities in Texas need more functional and clear access to curbside voting and there are bills moving through the state legislature aiming to improve that process.

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Peggy Harwood

self

Fort Worth, TX

I support curbside voting to accommodate citizens with mobility challenges who otherwise would not be able to physically enter a polling place to vote. Texas counties need to have signs that explain how voters can ask for this assistance. State and county elections websites also need to explain this as an option and provide instructions on how to arrange for curbside voting.

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Valerie Street

Texas Progressive Action Network

Austin, TX

Texas Progressive Action Network supports legislation with a goal of requiring clear outdoor signage and clearly marked designated parking spots for curbside voting so as to provide better access for individuals who need to request this method of voting. Additionally, we know that it is important that there be a means for voters to notify the polling place workers inside that they require assistance, be it a phone number to call or a call button that alerts staff and volunteers inside that a Texas voter needs their help.

Millions of Texans with disabilities have long had to work their way through a challenging process to cast a ballot even before the onslaught of a global pandemic. While Texas counties are all supposed to offer curbside voting to those who need it, the preparation and ability to actually manage it across all counties is far from equal and many voters are simply not aware of what their options are in those instances. Working towards making this process more functional and clear for polling place workers and voters is helpful for all and we thank lawmakers for their efforts in this matter.

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Phaleria Hollins

Self

Rowlett, TX

Affirmative on Bill: add a designated parking space for curbside voting. Benefits would provide visibility for curbside voting while not detracting from accessible parking at polling sites.

As a self-advocate to improve community awareness, I initiated a Curbside Voting Review Project with community volunteers. The goal was for volunteers to review polling centers in our county and complete a questionnaire on accessibility of curbside voting. Any problems discovered were raised to Elections Administrator to be corrected. Reviews were performed during Primary Election and General Election 2020 for both early voting and Election Day voting. Every center was evaluated for designated signage to direct voters who were physically unable to enter polling location where to go, park and cast a ballot using curbside voting process.

One conclusion: Designated Parking was an issue found during our project. Polling sites in our community are located at schools, libraries and other public spaces that have accessible parking being used during regular business hours. Addition of designated curbside voting parking space for voting will compliment the accessible parking in place. That way, people that require accessible parking during regular business hours will continue to benefit from assigned handicapped parking and not be compromised during voting seasons due to no available parking.

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Aaron Ramirez

Nueces county

Corpus Christi, TX

In the county of Nueces we do not see this need. We'd be opening the door for maybe a poll worker who advocates for a certain political candidate or policy, possibly impacting their vote. This is too risky for a fair election. Here in Nueces, our poll worker already assist but have not broken any law. We should expect little interaction with all voters by poll workers.

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Larry Ringler

self - retired

Portland, TX

I heartily oppose this bill because it makes it too easy for election official(s) to improperly influence how someone votes. Even if the comments are not intended to influence voters, officials should have as little contact as possible with voters.

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Cinde Weatherby, Voting Rights & Election Law Ch.

League of Women Voters of Texas

Austin, TX

These comments are presented on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Texas ?IN SUPPORT OF HB 478.? We appreciate the opportunity to offer this testimony to you today. Thank you for allowing us to share the League of Women Voters of Texas position on this bill.

LWVTX encourages all voters with disabilities to vote in every election. We call for providing resources to accommodate these voters whether they choose to enter the polling place, access the ballot by mail, or as provided in HB 478, vote in a vehicle parked close to the polling place.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data indicate that 25.6 percent of adults in Texas have a disability. Some individuals who have a disability not allowing them to enter the polling place without personal assistance or the likelihood of injuring their health, choose to go to the polling place like many other Texas voters. Providing a sign featuring a telephone number that is clearly readable from their vehicle is critical to them.

In June 2020, LWVTX hosted a webinar in partnership with REV UP Texas, the Texas Secretary of State's office and Disability Rights Texas to address the needs of voters with disabilities. Visible signage was noted by attendees as a priority. Using parking spaces not already designated specifically for persons with disabilities leaves them for voters with disabilities who are able to enter the polling location. Please favorably consider passage of HB 478.

Especially in the 77 counties participating in the countywide polling place program, ?we request that you not support any amendment that would eliminate heavily used polling places on the basis that they cannot provide close parking spaces for curbside voting.

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Julie Kellogg

self, self employed insurance agent

Corpus Christi, TX

The bill doesn't make sense. Having a space set aside for people with disabilities, but will not be designated as such, is not helpful. Only legal, registered voters with a photo ID who have a physical limitation that prevents them from entering the polling place should have accommodations made to assist them.

HB 22 addresses the issue of having designated spaces for those with disabilities.

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Jesse Suarez

Rabalais I&E Constructors

Corpus Christi, TX

This seems like an inefficient use of an election officer. Is said officer supposed to wait outside on the look out for voters physically unable to vote? Also why increase the interaction with voter and an election officer who could potentially influence that voter when parking spaces could be clearly marked in advance as designated for those who cant enter facility? I say no to this bill.

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Arthur Simon

self, artist

Austin, TX

I support this bill, as it preserves existing handicap parking spaces alongside those designated for curbside voting.

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Jennifer Lane

self

Denton, TX

Be very careful about demanding signature comparison because the people who traditionally use mail in ballots tip to the elderly and health conditions such as Parkinsons and others have a profound effect on signatures. Also, non-experts have been doing the signature comparisons. Rosalie Weisfeld, a 40-year voter in Texas, had her signature rejected erroneously and subsequently filed a lawsuit over this. Given the very tiny amount of fraud (statistically none), this signature match idea is a bad rabbit hole to follow.

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Mary Favret

self

The Woodlands, TX

In Montgomery County we had issues with campaigners soliciting to the voters waiting in their vehicles to do curbside. So these new spaces should have some boundaries to avoid them being approached.

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Jennifer Lane

self

Denton, TX

The line of questioning about everyone having access to US Mail as an argument against increasing the number of drop boxes is specious UNLESS Texas uses the POSTMARK DATE on the envelope to determine that ballot's eligibility. For the mail to be a viable, trustworthy option, the law needs to protect POSTMARK date, not the date the ballot is received.

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